

Concord Plan to End Homelessness
Meeting Notes
May 28, 2013

Committee Members Present: Nicole Schultz-Price, David Frydman, Patrick Tufts, Susan Howland, Cathy Kuhn, John Hoyt, Jerry Kingwell, Dan Andrus, John Duval, Jackie Whatmough, Maggie Fogarty, Tim Sink, Paul Rizzi

Others Present: Amy Lockwood (facilitator), Jacob Wasag, Ellen Fries, Rick Cote (from Belknap-Merrimack CAP), Bill Davis, and Pat Wallace

Recap of Current Events

David Frydman offered a brief recap of current events related to homelessness in Concord, including the city council's recent panhandling ordinance which was well-received by advocates, the ACLU, and the business community, and the lawsuit by several homeless people currently living on state land. David noted these are all indications of the importance of the big picture work this committee is conducting on behalf of the community.

Minutes

Dan Andrus moved to accept the April meeting minutes. Jackie Whatmough seconded the motion. The group unanimously approved the minutes.

Community Assets and Gaps in Addressing Homelessness

Jackie Whatmough and Tim Sink gave an overview of the results of the Asset Mapping meeting by a subgroup of this steering committee (see separate minutes).

Assessment of Cost of Homelessness – in Progress

Dan Andrus gave an overview of a project he has volunteered to take on: quantifying the cost of serving homeless people through emergency services. He undertook a similar project in Salt Lake City where he used to work. Dan plans to gather data from police, fire, Concord Hospital, City Human Services, and the public schools. Other ideas raised by the group included costs to the city General Services department and the cost of operating shelters.

The use of such an analysis could include: making the argument for resolving homelessness, identifying resources already being spent on the problem for comparison to costs of solutions, and using benchmark data (and hopefully future reductions in cost) as a measure of success.

Assets

Susan Howland presented information on assets in the Concord area for addressing homelessness including prevention resources (such as food pantries), short term direct service resources (such as case management and shelter resources), and long term solutions such as permanent affordable housing.

Gaps

The group also discussed the quantification of homeless people in Concord (see notes from Asset Mapping meeting). It is estimated that in total, Concord has about 1,000 homeless people present on a given day. Although it has over 150 shelter beds technically listed as available, all but about 80 are winter-only. Thus the numbers of homeless people are significantly higher than shelter beds at all times; in addition the group discussed subpopulations that are less likely to be successfully served through either the shelter or permanent housing resources at hand. These include populations like recently released prisoners and recently released former NH hospital patients. Increasing the number of shelter beds or federally subsidized housing units is not likely to significantly assist these populations.

The Geography Question

The group discussed the scope of this plan in terms of addressing the fact that some homeless people in Concord are only recently from Concord. They might be people who arrived on their own for personal reasons, people released from Concord-based institutions, or people referred to Concord shelters from 2-1-1 or human services departments or other organizations from nearby communities that don't have shelters.

The group agreed on a few items:

- The steering committee needs to gather real data on the numbers of “non-Concord” people in the homeless community – this will help determine the scale of resources appropriate to direct toward a variety of subpopulations.
- From a public policy approach, it probably makes sense to think of this as a regional issue, as there is some logical pattern to the fact that shelters would be located in a central more urban area as a resource to a region, but then resources should be considered on a regional basis as well.
- It was noted that as regional contributions to and use of services is quantified, on the resource side, non-Concord donors and volunteers to various nonprofits addressing homelessness should be part of the equation.
- It would help to create a thorough list of what policies are shaping the system and results we have now. For instance, Jackie referred to a state [law or regulation?] that

requires any town to help someone who arrives for assistance at the human services department, regardless of how long they have been in the community. Understanding these policies may help shape strategy.

- Once there is good data and a policy and regulation map, the Steering Committee can better determine what it can and cannot influence in the plan.
- At a minimum, this plan should include data gathering activity for the next three years so the geographic flow of homeless people and at-risk people is better-understood, so that future plans might include more concrete strategy about regional resource and service planning.

High Priority Target Populations for the Plan

In prior meetings the following groups have been discussed as possible high priority populations to address in the plan:

- Chronically homeless (estimated about 144 people at any point in time)
- Homeless family members (estimated about 464 people at any point in time)
- Unsheltered homeless people (estimated about 228 people at any point in time)
- People causing a “downtown, disruptive presence” (no quantification available)

After much discussion the Steering Committee decided it is not ready to identify high priority populations for the plan. More discussion with community members and data is needed. Also, the groups above intersect, so it’s hard to make distinctions with strategies for each at this point.

The group put aside the decision of high priority populations at this point in time and will revisit it when developing strategies later in the process.

People Who Need to Be Engaged to Make Strategies Successful

Re: Quantifying the Issue, Developing Strategies

- Department of Corrections
- Faith community – in particular churches who already do homeless-related service and outreach work
- The local public school homeless outreach worker – Robert Belmont
- Concord Homeless Service Providers (group that meets fairly regularly)
- Homeless people/ people who have been recently homeless
- Landlord community
- Housing developers
- Property managers
- Riverbend

- NAMI
- County representative – Liz Blanchard (about perspective on coordinating jail release better, and about the possibility of resource sharing)
- NH Hospital
- Concord Hospital (cost of emergency care of homeless people)
- The Family Health Center (serves homeless individuals now)
- Capital Region Substance Abuse
- Retail/ other small business owners
- Intown Concord
- Early Learning NH
- Child and Family Services
- Head Start
- DHHA – Germano Martin
- Leaders of contiguous towns (at least for education/ dialogue purposes)
- NH Legal Assistance/ LARC

Re: Solutions, Barriers to Solutions, Removing Barriers

- Municipal housing committee (focused on affordable housing development)
- CATCH
- City Planning – barriers to low cost housing

Re: Advocacy-Oriented Solutions

- Housing Action NH (statewide advocacy group)
- Governor’s housing staff person – Amy Kennedy
- Bi-State Primary Care Association

Re: Funding for Solutions – both Development and Human-Service/ Health Oriented

- NH Housing (in resource/ funder role) – Chris Miller
- Endowment for Health
- NH Charitable Foundation
- CDFA
- Local service clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary)

Re: Increasing Financial Stability/ Capacity to Afford Housing

- Job training – NH Works/ Employment Security
- Retail/ other small business owners
- Employers
- Intown Concord

Next Steps

- Social service provider members of the group agreed to meet to create the “asset map” of services in Concord, and a clearer picture of Concord homelessness.
- The next Steering Committee meeting will be at 6:30 pm on May 28 in the same location at Sulloway and Hollis.
- The small group will work on school representation in the project.